



# VASSIL LEVSKY

THE GREAT BULGARIAN PATRIOT  
AND REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRAT

SOFIA — 1953





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IVAN UNDJIEV

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*"If I win, it will be a victory  
for the whole people, if I lose, the  
loss will be only mine."*

*Vassil Levsky*

*"Levsky bequeathed us to fight  
for the national independence of  
our country and to safeguard it  
as the most precious treasure."*

*Vulko Chervenkov*

SOFIA — 1953







## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Eighty years ago on February 19 Vassil Levsky, the heart and soul of Bulgaria's national liberation movement, died on the gallows for his people's freedom. His memory will live forever in the minds of all Bulgarians. His work as a leader of the people and organiser of the revolution for national liberation still fires the enthusiasm of every patriot. His lofty example inspires the masses to heroic deeds.

Imbued with the pure patriotism of a consistent revolutionary democrat, he did his part in the battle for freedom, national independence and democracy of all peoples.

Vassil Levsky emerged as a revolutionary of remarkable stature at the end of the five-century Turkish bondage. Turkish feudal oppression was the most barbarous that history had ever known. The excesses, plundering, massacres and the policy of forcible denationalisation pursued by the feudal enslaver completely ruined the country. All travellers, coming from the West and passing through this country, painted the situation of the people in the darkest hues.

The peasantry, the bulk of the Bulgarian population, had to pay eighty different taxes. One of the heaviest was the blood tax or «ispenc.» It consisted in taking away Bulgarian boys, making Turks of them and sending them to the corps of janissaries, where they were educated in a spirit of religious fanaticism and hatred of the enslaved peoples.

The cruel exploitation and arbitrariness of the feudal lords, the robbery of local tax-collectors who fleeced the population, the complete national, political and economic oppression rendered the lot of the Bulgarian people unbearable.

Only those Bulgarians who served as intermediaries between the Turkish masters and the Bulgarians were able



to achieve better positions. They used their posts as interpreters, as tax-farmers and others to acquire personal wealth. The privileged Bulgarians became faithful supporters of the Turkish feudal order. Early in the 18th century, when Turkish feudalism began to disintegrate, these Bulgarians formed the chorbadjî class.

The Bulgarian people, however, never put up with oppression and servitude. They refused to bend the knee to the enslaver.

Their whole history is a succession of uprisings and rebellions. The first uprising broke out as early as the 15th century. Bulgarians also took part in the Balkan campaign of the Polish-Hungarian Emperor Vladislav III, hoping that the enslaver would be driven out of their country. The Turko-Austrian wars at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries roused new hopes in the Bulgarian people. Revolts broke out in Turnovo and Chiprovtsi. These uprisings failed, however, primarily because there was no social force capable of heading the struggle against the feudal order.

The people resorted to another form of resistance — the haiduk bands. Valiant, freedom-loving sons of the people, the haiduks took to the mountains, and organising armed bands, retaliated for the insults and sufferings inflicted upon them by the Turks. Their revenge was actually the revenge of the people against their feudal oppressors, against the arbitrariness and plundering of the Turkish officials. The people looked upon the haiduks as their heroes, because the latter personified their strivings for justice and freedom.

The hope that the light of freedom was to come from brotherly Russia was deeply cherished by the enslaved people. Their faith in the liberating mission of the great Russian people grew stronger as the might of the Russian state increased.

In the 18th century a number of radical changes took place in Turkey's economic life. Industry developed and home and foreign trade grew in scope. The old feudal forms began to disintegrate and new commodity relations were established. The newly emerging class of merchants and craftsmen became the representative of these relations.



Vassil Levsky embarked upon his revolutionary activity in the second half of the 19th century, when after the Crimean War of 1853-1856, the Turkish feudal system began to decline rapidly. This paved the way for the organisation of a mass revolutionary movement in Bulgaria. Turkey widely opened her frontiers to the industrial goods of England and France, her allies, in return for the «aid» they had granted her during the Crimean War. West-European capital also penetrated Turkey, monopolising a number of important branches of the country's economy.

The British and French capitalists took advantage of this situation to keep Turkey in a semi-colonial dependence. The financial ruin of the decaying Turkish feudal state had reached such dimensions that the «Grande Porte» had to resort to new loans to pay interest on the old ones.

Bulgarian craftsmen could not compete with the cheaper and better made factory goods. Their production began to decline rapidly. Bulgarian craftsmen were ruined, the small merchants following in their wake.

Nor was the situation of the peasantry any better. The majority of them possessed no land. The small farm producers were ruthlessly exploited by the Turkish state and its corrupt officials. The tax burden lay entirely on the shoulders of the peasantry. Towards the end of the Turkish rule the tax in kind, constituting one third of the total state revenue, became particularly heavy. The substitution of cash payment for the tax in kind placed the peasants at the mercy of usurers and merchants. Heavily indebted they were forced to sell their crops in advance at ridiculously low prices.

The Bulgarian craftsmen and peasants saw no way out of their plight but the early collapse of the Turkish state. The majority of the town producers believed that only an independent national state could restrict the penetration of foreign goods and capital, could ensure conditions favourable to economic development and secure a livelihood for all Bulgarian artisans and tradesmen. The peasantry, on the other hand, hoped that the overthrow of Ottoman rule would rid them of the unbearable tax burden and that the abolition of the remnants of Turkish feudalism would enable them to secure land for themselves.



The enslaved and impoverished masses of people entertained no illusions that the overthrow of the Turkish state and the complete liberation of the Bulgarian people from the political, social and economic oppression of decaying Turkish feudalism could be achieved by peaceful means, negotiations and concessions.

Able and devoted leaders came forward from among the revolutionary-minded masses in town and village. They headed the revolutionary movement, organised and popularised the liberation struggle and moulded the aspirations of the people into a well-rounded, revolutionary ideology.

A true son of the people Vassil Levsky became the ideologist and leader of the working people in their struggle for political freedom, national independence and democracy.

### **LEVSKY — LEADER OF THE PEOPLE AND ORGANISER OF THE REVOLUTION**

Vassil Ivanov Levsky, the apostle of Bulgarian freedom, was born on July 6, 1837 in Karlovo, an important Bulgarian handicrafts centre before the liberation. Levsky's father, Ivan Kounchev, died prematurely and the future revolutionary and his two young brothers were brought up by their mother, Gina Kouncheva.

Vassil Levsky attended elementary school in his native town. The family was in very straitened circumstances and the young lad was compelled to become a servant to his uncle Hadji Vassily, a monk at the Hilendar Monastery. Both mother and son cherished the hope that the rich uncle would send him to study in Russia. This was young Vassil's ardent desire, as he was eager to study, the better to serve his people. Enrolling in the primary school of Stara Zagora, a town to which his uncle had moved, Levsky finished the second class. He passed his examinations brilliantly and Hadji Vassily repeated his promise to send him to Russia. At the request of his uncle, the future revolutionary consented to become a monk and was ordained a deacon. At that time the idea of a revolutionary struggle had penetrated deeper into the consciousness of the Bulgarian people. Young Levsky saw new perspectives open.



ing up before him. The people were calling him to a determined fight for freedom. Loyal to them the deacon, now a young man, responded to this call. «Since 1861 I have dedicated my life to my country,» he wrote, «to serve it till I die and to work according to the will of the people.» Casting off the cassock, he joined the first Bulgarian Legion organised by Georgi Rakovsky.

Rakovsky (1821-1867), an ardent patriot and fighter for freedom, was the founder of the revolutionary ideology of Bulgaria's national liberation movement.

He believed that well organised, politically conscious detachments directed from a single-leading centre, should constitute the motive force of the liberation struggle. He was the first to work out a revolutionary strategic plan for an uprising. In 1861 with the aid of the Serbian government in Belgrade he formed a detachment of volunteers, known as the Bulgarian Legion. After the outbreak of the war between Serbia and Turkey the Legion was to invade Bulgaria and call the people to arms.

Vassil Levsky received his first schooling in organisational work at the Legion. Strong and agile, he was first in physical education. Once, jumping across a ditch, he outdid everybody. Rakovsky cried with admiration: «Why, this is a lion's leap!» These words spread rapidly and thereafter young Vassil was called by the name of Levsky<sup>1)</sup> which went down in history.

At the Legion the future apostle of freedom realised for the first time the importance of organisation and discipline. But when he met most of the revolutionaries working in the liberation movement, he grasped the real meaning of solidarity and unity of thought binding them together and giving them strength to overcome all obstacles. Levsky's revolutionary outlook was first shaped under Rakovsky's influence, while they worked together at the Legion.

After the Legion was disbanded Levsky returned to Bulgaria and became a school-master. The young teacher loved children, easily made friends with people and soon

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1) «Lev» means «lion» in Bulgarian.



won the hearts of young and old. The young people rallied around him. He told them about the Legion, about Rakovsky's plans, and taught them military discipline and gymnastic exercises.

The activity of the former deacon and member of the Belgrade Legion did not escape the eye of the Turkish authorities and he was compelled to flee to the border region of Dobrudja from where he tried to get in touch with Rakovsky. Giving up his teaching job in the spring of 1867, Levsky went to Rumania. There he joined Panayot Hitov's detachment, the first of Rakovsky's projected fighting units to cross the Bulgarian frontier. At Rakovsky's special request Levsky was appointed standard-bearer by the chief voivode. Brisk and full of energy, Levsky gave a fine account of himself and became the voivode's first assistant. Courageous in battle and vigilant in repose he watched over the safety and discipline of the detachment. During the expedition in the Balkan mountain the observant young revolutionary realised how unprepared the people were to wage a systematic, well organised struggle.

When the detachment passed into Serbia, he hastened to join the Second Legion formed in Belgrade. The aim of the Legion was to prepare military leaders for the future uprising in the shortest possible time. At first, training was conducted as in a well organised military school. Levsky always excelled the rest of the members. His thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. Most assiduously did he study the theoretical subjects. He could add to these his personal experience acquired during the expedition in the Balkan mountain. Soon, however, conditions in the Legion became unbearable. Having changed its political course, the Serbian government provoked the Legion members in every possible way so as to make them leave the school of their own accord. The leading factors did not conceal their chauvinistic aims, sorely trampling upon the national feelings of the Bulgarians. Their intention to disband the Legion was made all too clear.

For the second time the Belgrade ruling clique scuttled the attempts to achieve concerted action.



## ALONG A NEW PATH

While still in the Legion Levsky fell seriously ill. During his convalescence he had ample time carefully to reconsider the state of the liberation movement and to seek the reasons for its setbacks. Assessing past experience, he came to the realisation that the revolutionising of the masses opened up new perspectives for the liberation struggle. «I beg you again,» he wrote to Panayot Hitov, «do come and see me! Or should I write you what I intend to do. . . If I win, it will be a victory for the whole people, if I lose, the loss will be only mine.»

The future revolutionary imparted to Hitov the thought which preoccupied his mind and which he preferred to share with the voivode in person. A change had occurred in Levsky's ideology. He began entertaining the idea of preparing the ground for an uprising inside the country. He knew all too well that the task lying ahead of him was hard and full of responsibilities, but if he succeeded — the whole people would succeed, if he failed, it would be only his own ruin.

Driven out by the chauvinist Serbian government Levsky and his comrades went to Rumania. There he met Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadjia who were then setting up their revolutionary detachment. Long illness prevented Levsky from joining the expedition of the two voivodes. On the other hand, he had already begun to doubt the efficaciousness of these detachments.

The fruitless attempts at concerted action with Serbia made him realise that aid from abroad was not to be relied upon. The liberation movement had to depend entirely on its own forces at home.

The idea of organising the whole Bulgarian people for a general uprising was the highest achievement of political thought at the time of the liberation struggle. The organisation of revolutionary committees was the final stage in the development of the Bulgarian national revolution. The liberation movement leaders before Levsky were not alien to the idea of creating an internal organisation. No one of them, however, was able fully to grasp its signal importance and the great role which it was to play in the



preparation of the uprising, and what is more, no one was able to carry it into effect. Levsky came to that conclusion independently, on the basis of his personal experience and the natural development of the liberation movement. Possessing the qualities of a talented organiser and inspired ideologist of the revolutionary movement, he set out to put his ideas into practice.

In Rumania Levsky joined the youth group at the «Bulgarian community» in Bucharest, where he found fertile soil for his ideas. These revolutionary emigrants, representing as they did, various ideological trends, were themselves not far from the thought of independent organised action.

The friendship between Vassil Levsky and Hristo Botev, the other outstanding figure of the Bulgarian revolutionary democratic movement dates back to that period.

A poet of genius, a talented publicist and tribune of the people, Hristo Botev (1849-1876) headed the liberation movement after Levsky's death. Taking up the work of his predecessors, he developed the ideology of the revolutionary-liberation movement to its highest point, identifying the fight of the Bulgarian people for justice and freedom with that of all oppressed peoples throughout the world.

Early in 1866 the two friends lived together sharing privations and hardships. This is what Botev had to say about it in a letter:

«... I live on the very edge of Bucharest in a windmill, together with my compatriot Vassil the deacon. Do not ask us how we live, because we scarcely find bread to assuage our hunger every two or three days... My friend Levsky, with whom I am living, is an amazing character. When we find ourselves in the most critical situation he is just as merry as when we are in the best of situations. It's cold, so cold that wood and stones are cracking, we are hungry, having eaten nothing for two or three days, yet he sings and is always gay. In the evening he sings until we go to bed, in the morning, as soon as he opens his eyes, he sings again. No matter how desperate you may be, he will make you merry and get you to forget all sorrow and suffering. It is pleasant for a man to live with such a person!...»



With the aid of the «Bulgarian community» in Bucharest Levsky made his first tour in Bulgaria via Constantinople. His tour, lasting two and a half months, was of an informative character.

Returning to Rumania, he stayed there two months and again left for Turkey, this time with authorisation papers and proclamations bearing the seal of the «Bulgarian Provisional Government in the Balkan mountain». He began his second tour with clearly defined ideas concerning the new tactics of the national-revolutionary movement and its impending tasks. During this tour he laid the foundations of a revolutionary organisation in Bulgaria, setting up the first revolutionary committees in a number of towns and villages in North and South Bulgaria.

Everywhere Levsky went, he found sympathizers and trusted people. Devoted revolutionaries helped him establish a link between the different towns and villages.

In Rumania Levsky had long disputes with representatives of the group of «Young Bulgarians», trying to convince them that the people could be liberated only by means of a revolutionary organisation in the country itself and that the emigrants of various ideological trends should unite for concerted action in the name of the common good.

He wrote to one of the emigrants in Rumania:

«Brother, we were unable to reach an understanding by way of persuasion. My duty then was to return to Bulgaria and there to work as best we could. All of you who are willing to come along should let us know and will be welcome.»

## **ORGANISATION OF THE BULGARIAN CENTRAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE**

Levsky's efforts were not late in bearing fruit. The ideological discussions and disputes with the «Young Bulgarians» brought him into contact with the group of Lyuben Karavelov. This group, the first to adopt Levsky's ideas and to embrace his cause, gave him material aid during his first tour.

Lyuben Karavelov, (1837-1879) one of the outstanding leaders in Bulgaria's liberation movement, lived in Moscow



for many years. There he formed his world outlook and developed into a talented writer under the influence of progressive writers and revolutionary democrats. Settling in Bucharest in 1869, he devoted all his efforts and abilities to his people's struggle for liberation. He began editing the newspaper «Freedom», later called «Independence» which played an important role in the development of the national revolutionary movement.

In April 1870 Karavelov and Levsky laid the foundations of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee (BCRC).

They agreed on the programme of the Committee and drew up its main lines which Karavelov later worked out in detail. The programme was published for the first time in the Russian emigrants' magazine «The People's Cause» on August 1, 1870. It appeared in Bulgarian in the newspaper «Freedom» on October 14, the same year.

The aim of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee as indicated in the programme was: «Freedom for the people, personal and religious rights, in one word — human rights.» Freedom was to be won by driving away the Turkish oppressor from the homeland. In carrying this into effect a dual plan was envisaged: first of all, peaceful means were to be used and «only in case of urgent need arms, fire and knife» were to be resorted to. By peaceful means Karavelov meant the internal pressure brought to bear on the Turkish government by the spiritual, political and economic awakening of the Bulgarian people.

Karavelov had not enough confidence in the people's forces. The programme reflected his uncertainty as to the future form of government, a question to be decided upon later, in his opinion.

Levsky looked upon the foundation of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee as an act of paramount importance. It established, above all, a certain unity between the emigrants and the revolutionaries within the country. The committee was faced with the task of doing away with the differences existing among the emigrants and uniting them in the name of the common cause. It was to play no mean role inside the country as well. The revolutionary organisation had already won prestige among the masses. It introduced unity and system in the



work of the revolutionaries and inspired them with confidence in the liberation movement.

Levsky became the heart and soul of the organisation. Henceforth he was to appear before the people not only with the fascination of his personality, but also with the authority of a man clad in power and capable of building up a network of revolutionary committees within the country.

In May 1870 he crossed the Danube to resume his great work.

### LEVSKY'S PERSONALITY

Persistently and tirelessly Levsky continued to build a network of revolutionary committees throughout the country.

He toured towns and villages, rallied the revolutionary forces, organised local committees, gave directives for work, established passwords and assumed names, read and interpreted the statute of the organisation and swore the people's sons to loyalty and devotion to the liberation movement. His words were simple and clear, imbued with great confidence in the liberation movement and in the people's forces. They found wide response in the hearts of the oppressed people:

His manner of speaking was simple and brief,  
Imbuing sweet hope and inspiring belief;  
And often he spoke of revolt, of the fray  
As an imminent, popular festival day,  
Yet the hour of deliverance nobody knew.  
He sought everyone with a sound heart and true,  
Who was ready to join in the sacred endeavour,  
And each of his servants was also his brother.

His moral purity, simple life and friendly behaviour won him many friends. Everywhere he went he received a warm welcome. Peasants and merchants, craftsmen and intellectuals — and especially the poor folk joined their efforts in the liberation cause and the revolution:



The peasants in simpleness called him a saint;  
In secret they gathered — the secret remained.  
With hearts all a-tremble, eyes thrilling they heard  
The rebel's sweet-sounding yet dangerous word.  
And thus in their consciousness all became clear.

.....  
.....  
Their hearts took the magical seed that he cast,  
It ripened to yield a rich harvest at last.

Ivan Vazov

A man of inexhaustible energy and cheerful disposition, he dispelled all doubts, breathed confidence in the people and strengthened their will to battle. The revolutionary organisation grew by leaps and bounds. At that time Levsky laid the foundations of revolutionary committees in a number of towns and villages in North Bulgaria, in Sofia and in other towns. In the second half of the year the future centres of the April uprising Panagyurishte, Koprivshtitsa, Batak and others also joined the movement.

A brilliant propagandist, Levsky was also endowed with organisational ability such as no other Bulgarian revolutionary in the pre-liberation period possessed. Capable and far-sighted, strict and persistent, exacting and prudent, he inspired the people to action. Using the abilities of those with whom he worked to the best advantage, he set up a network of revolutionary committees.

It was to his fine qualities of a great people's leader that Levsky owed his remarkable success. A man of fabulous courage and extraordinary presence of mind he possessed great resourcefulness and an iron firmness in days of trial.

Once after a narrow escape from the police, Levsky found asylum in the small village of Dubene, in the home of his friend, the teacher Lilo. Unexpectedly, a squadron of gendarmes arrived in the village, stopping at the house of his host. The tidings of the arrival of the uninvited guests rapidly spread throughout the village. Seeing the posse from afar, Lilo was frightened to death. He sent his cousin to meet the Turks, while he rushed into the room to warn Levsky. «We are betrayed!» were the only words the excited teacher could utter.



At first Levsky saw no other way out but to fight the Turks. Sternly he said to his friend: «Take your gun! We shall fight our way out!» Then he changed his mind. Immediately they worked out a plan for action. Lilo went to meet the guests, while Levsky put on shepherd's clothes and moccasins, bandaged his eye, and carrying a crook in his hand, calmly passed by the gendarmes who were drinking slivovitsa. The ailing shepherd crossed the yard and took the road to Sopot.

When the Turks finished their snack, one of the gendarmes felt doubtful whether the ailing shepherd was not the commitadji they wanted. Lilo categorically denied the suggestion and let no one intimidate him by any threats. Nevertheless, the squadron leader gave orders to his men to mount their horses and set off for the neighbouring Sopot.

Levsky did not tarry long there. He threw off his shepherd's clothes, dressed himself as a Turk, wrapped up a thick turban round his fez, swung a small barrel of cheese up on his shoulder and made for the market in Karlovo.

Greatly worried, Lilo also took the road to Karlovo where going from store to store and from person to person he tried to find out what had happened to Levsky. Seeing that the posse was coming from Sopot, he was terribly frightened. «He is caught,» thought Lilo, almost ready to faint. At that moment, however, a stooping Turk with a turban pulled right down to his eyebrows, with a barrel on his shoulder, poked him with his elbow and scolded him in Turkish: «Where are your eyes, giaour, don't you see a man is passing!» Lilo sighed with relief and humbly drew aside to show his respect to the «Turk».

A few days later Levsky left Karlovo. The valiant revolutionary took the «safest road» — he followed in the steps of the posse which was returning to Sopot after a futile search.

### LEVSKY'S IDEOLOGY

Levsky owed his unique popularity among the Bulgarian people both to his magnetic personality and his ideology of a consistent revolutionary democrat. His whole life-work was inseparably linked with this ideology.



One of Levsky's first tasks after his return to Bulgaria was to establish a central seat of the revolutionary movement uniting all committees in the country. For such a centre he selected the Lovech committee, calling it «Bulgarian Provisional Government», the first detachment of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee.

Levsky was the first to realise the necessity of a fundamental law introducing plan and unity of action, defining the responsibilities and establishing the rights and obligations of every member of the organisation. A genuine democrat, he believed that this law had to be worked out by «the people and the revolutionaries» in Bulgaria.

In actual fact, however, the statute was drawn up by Levsky himself. The participation of the «people and the revolutionaries» was expressed by the approval and the preliminary discussions of the statute to which Levsky attached special importance. «The draft-statute,» wrote Hristo Ivanov, one of the revolutionaries, «went from town to town, from village to village. The people read it. They approved what they liked, and cut out what they did not like or considered unnecessary.» For the same purpose Levsky sent his draft-statute to the emigrants.

The aim of the organisation as stated by the statute was: «By means of a nation-wide revolution to bring about a radical change in the present rule of tyranny and establish a democratic republic (a people's rule).» Great patriot as he was, he looked upon freedom of the homeland as the supreme goal and in the fight for winning it, he placed the «interest of the people above all.» One had to «sacrifice everything, even one's own life.» The revolution was to bring not only freedom, but also the future form of state government — «a pure and sacred republic.» Levsky wrote the following in the penal section of the draft-statute: «Any one who condemns or renounces this projected state system — a democratic republic — or forms parties to the end of establishing a despotic-tyrannical or constitutional-monarchic system, is to be considered an enemy to his homeland and condemned to death.»

The republic was defined as a «people's rule» which after the overthrow of the inhuman and despotic domination of the Turkish «plunderers and janissaries» was to erect a



temple of «true and just freedom» where «only harmony, brotherhood and full equality among all nations will reign.»

The fight was directed not only against the dominant Turkish feudal class, but also against its tools — the Bulgarian chorbadjis.

The draft-statute was alien to every chauvinism and pseudo-patriotism. «Our aim in Bulgaria,» explained Levsky in a letter, «is brotherhood among all people, irrespective of religious creed and nationality.» All nationalities in Bulgaria, Turks included, were to be bound by the same «unsullied and sacred laws.» All nationalities «will be equal in every respect.» After the liberation «they will be bound by a common law, voted by the majority of the people of all nationalities.»

In the draft-statute the «democratic republic» — the ultimate goal of freedom — was called «Balkan Republic.» Vassil Levsky was a fervent advocate of the joint struggle for freedom and democracy of all Slav and Balkan peoples. «We will lend a friendly hand to every one who in common with us will shed his blood for life and human freedom,» he wrote to Karavelov.

Stating that the Bulgarian flag would bear the inscription «pure and sacred republic», he wished the same «to our brothers, the Serbians, Rumanians, Montenegrins and others.» He considered the establishment of a common federation, which he called «Balkan Republic» the ultimate goal of the Balkan people. Filled with great confidence in the strength of the people which «no power on earth can oppose,» Levsky pictured his liberated homeland as a truly democratic country.

In connection with the plea for aid addressed by some Bulgarians to the Russian Emperor, Vassil Levsky wrote to Philip Totyu: «God grant that he (the Emperor) help our Republic, even though he persecutes the Russian republicans and dooms them to death in the prisons.»

In the draft-statute Levsky defined not only the aims and tasks of the national revolution, but also by what means they should be achieved — organisation, people, money and arms. Realising that organisation was the first and foremost task, he worked out a detailed plan for setting up committees.



## CHARACTER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

The supreme leadership of the organisation belonged to the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee, which was a representative organ of the people.

The revolutionary organisation was built up on the principle of democratic centralism. The local committees in towns and villages enjoyed equal rights and maintained direct relations with the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee. The organisation had special punitive organs, responsible directly to the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee. They controlled the activity of the revolutionaries and combated Turkish espionage. The voivodes, appointed through competition tests, were the military leaders of the people. Unity of action was the watchword of the organisation, power was to emanate from a single centre. That is why the draft-statute ended with a «proclamation» which conferred on the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee the power of a provisional government, without whose authorisation no one could represent the Bulgarian people before other countries, set up committees or give the signal for a revolution.

The revolutionary draft-statute revealed the great scope, the profound thought and broad outlook of the great leader of the people, who was not only an inspired apostle of the national revolution, but also its first legislator.

Levsky focussed his attention on the selection of his men. The success of the work depended on the unflinching devotion of the revolutionaries. That is why they had to be tested and investigated most carefully. «Examination is indispensable,» Levsky wrote. It was necessary to test the people, so as to assign them tasks according to their abilities. «The right job for the right man,» he wrote. In this work «the leaders must know their men thoroughly. . . They should know what these men are good at and what their faults are, so as to ward off failure and ruin. They should also criticise one another without detriment to their work. Assign tasks to men who are rational, perseverant, fearless and generous.»

Men «possessing some knowledge of military tactics and discipline» were necessary for the revolution. Levsky



made a detailed list of the things the scientifically trained military leaders should know and the qualities they should possess, thus informing the local committees of the requirements for admission of Bulgarian boys to the newly opened military school in Odessa.

He also devoted a great deal of thought to the plan of the revolution. It had to embrace the whole country. The enemy had to be taken by surprise and crushed before he could unfold his forces. But the uprising was not to break out before the people were fully prepared for it.

The great revolutionary laid particularly strong emphasis on criticism. «We revolutionary leaders, should consult each other most often, because we are all liable to make mistakes, which we cannot overcome alone. We should love those who show us our mistakes and make them our friends.»

Reproached by some revolutionary emigrants that he did not see the beam in his own eye, but easily saw the mote in their eyes, he declared: «Stop beating about the bush and say openly: these are your mistakes, so that I may correct myself if I am a real man, just as I do not overlook your mistakes and the messes you make. We are working for our fatherland, brothers! You tell me my faults and I will tell you yours, so that we may correct ourselves and work together as honest men.»

In the fight for freedom there was no room for petty ambition and vain pride. The revolutionaries carried out the will of the people. This was Levsky's firm conviction. «They should suppress any trace of pride... Whatever we deserve — good or bad — is never lost. We who have decided to serve our fatherland till we die do not need such trivialities.»

«We are eager to see our fatherland free,» he once remarked, «after that I don't mind if I am sent to tend the geese!» Levsky did not seek any favours for himself, even if he well deserved them. He was willing to cede his place to any one «who has a better head.»

What was more, he was convinced that it was his duty to ask that person to take his place. «I have pledged my life to the liberation of my homeland,» Levsky said, «and not to becoming a person of importance.»



The purity of his thoughts was never marred by a personal consideration. His duty and the interests of the cause stood above everything. His love for the homeland, for freedom and democracy was boundless, his loyalty and devotion to the revolution and the people unshakable.

His modesty, however, did not betray lack of self-confidence. On the contrary, he was fully conscious of the historic importance of his mission. He also believed in the gratitude of posterity, which he considered the greatest of all rewards to the fighter for freedom.

Another important task facing Levsky was to secure money and arms. «Money is indispensable,» he declared. It was needed to supply the people with arms. All sacrifices were to be made at the altar of freedom. The letters sent in the name of the Provisional Bulgarian Government to well-to-do Bulgarians failed to bring the expected results. The rich remained indifferent to freedom and aloof from or hostile to the work of the Committee. Levsky was compelled to send threatening letters to intimidate the chorbadjis in order to raise the necessary funds. The lack of money haunted him and hindered his work. Still the chorbadjis remained deaf to his appeal. The people «are suffering torture and outrages, most abhorrent to human conscience and freedom,» Levsky wrote to the chorbadjis and accosted them openly: «Aren't you, chorbadjis, to blame for the lawlessness and outrages we are witnessing?» He knew, however, the grave dangers lurking in terrorism and tried to restrain the revolutionaries from using such means. He preferred to raise funds from «the people themselves,» as he put it.

He did not hesitate for a moment to place the work of the organisation and the interests of the poor people above all, even if it meant encroaching upon the life of enemies and traitors: «Those chorbadjis, blood-suckers and enemies of the people, who betray the liberation struggle instead of taking part in it, should be disposed of in time,» Levsky wrote to the citizens of Sliven in the summer of 1871. Commenting on the activity of deacon Paissy, an avowed enemy of the organisation, he wrote to Dimitar Obshty: «Watch his actions, let some of our trusted men who are clever and alert shadow him. If he interferes too much, send him to his last account.»



Money was necessary for the cause. Levsky often disposed of large funds but he himself lived as an ascetic. His moral purity and idealism were of the highest quality. His disinterestedness and his frugal life were best revealed by the accounts he kept. With painstaking conscientiousness he kept strict account of his most insignificant expenses. Scrupulous almost to fanaticism, Levsky was always guided by his extraordinary sense of responsibility in expending public funds.

Late in 1871 the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee in Bucharest sent him Dimitar Obshty and Anghel Kunchev as assistants.

Dimitar Obshty was a rebel of an adventurous spirit. Levsky received him with cold reserve. He had known him in Belgrade and could not rely «solely on recommendations» until he, himself, had not put him to the test.

Anghel Kunchev arrived three months later. An ardent young patriot, Kunchev left the agricultural school in Tabor (Czechoslovakia) and returned to Bulgaria dedicating his life to his oppressed people.

Levsky saw in Kunchev a sincere and devoted revolutionary who, though young and inexperienced — he was barely twenty — would cope with the work and would «unerringly» fulfil his obligations.

The revolutionary activity of Anghel Kunchev, however, did not last longer than half a year. On his way to Rumania he was suspected by the Turkish authorities who tried to arrest him. Kunchev preferred to commit suicide rather than be caught alive.

Investigating the case, Levsky tried to restore calm among the revolutionaries: «Do not fear such a death, Bulgarian brothers. This is the sweetest, most honourable and dignified death for every Bulgarian today. Audacity and steadfastness are required of us. The time is drawing near — we shall soon see the light of freedom.»

### GENERAL MEETING IN BUCHAREST.

The general meeting of representatives of all local committees in Bulgaria and abroad held in the spring of 1872 was an event of paramount importance in the life of the revolutionary organisation. It was Levsky's initiative to



summon this meeting, which was imperative for three reasons. Firstly, it was necessary to achieve full unity within the ranks of the organisation. No difference of opinion existed as to the ultimate goal but opinions on tactical questions were divergent. That necessitated the drafting of a common programme which was to be adopted by the meeting. Secondly, unity had to be effected in the structure of the organisation in Bulgaria by adopting and enacting the statute drafted by Levsky. Thirdly, he felt it was necessary to report to the leaders of the liberation movement how his work had so far proceeded in Bulgaria.

The meeting which opened on June 29, 1872 in Bucharest, was attended by 25 delegates representing Bulgarian, Rumanian and Bessarabian (Bolgrad) committees. The Bulgarian delegates, representing several committees each, commanded 33 votes against 17 votes of the emigrants. Levsky's wish that matters should be decided by the majority, «the Bulgarian majority in particular», was fully complied with.

The meeting approved the programme of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee and elected a new Central Committee. Vassil Levsky was unanimously approved as the chief organiser of the liberation movement in Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia. As a member of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee he was given the following authorisation paper:

«The bearer of this letter, known until recently by the name of Aslan Dervishoglu Kurdjali, which name he may change according to circumstances, after advising everyone concerned, is fully empowered by this letter signed by the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee to work among the Bulgarians throughout the country and to seek their co-operation for the victory of our people's cause, for the liberation of our dear homeland Bulgaria. The same person is to represent the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee in every capacity and possesses unrestricted rights to act, naturally within the limits of the statute.

«The Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee has full confidence in this person and, therefore, requests every Bulgarian already working in our movement or ready to join it, all Bulgarians for that matter, to give him their



full confidence, to heed his orders and turn to him for everything pertaining to our people's cause. . . »

Relying on his personal authority and the confidence voted him by the meeting and the Central Committee, Levsky possessed unrestricted power to set the stage for revolution in Bulgaria.

The apostle and the rest of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee members swore allegiance to the people's cause and circulated a special letter among the local revolutionary committees in the country to inform them of the decisions taken at the general meeting in Bucharest.

Levsky's work found general recognition. The path along which he was leading the people to freedom was acknowledged as a historical necessity. It fell to his lot to carry the liberation cause to a successful end. Morally satisfied and imbued with new energy he left Bucharest and returned to Bulgaria. The organisation members were happy to welcome their leader back. Hoping that he had had «a pleasant trip» and congratulating him on «the good success» Hristo Ivanov, one of the outstanding revolutionaries, cautioned him to take care of himself and never to go alone where danger was rife, «because thousands like us can be more easily spared than one like you.»

Upon his return to Bulgaria Levsky sent the local committees printed copies of the statute and a circular letter by the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee. He resumed his organisational work and prepared a general meeting to report on the decisions taken in Bucharest.

### ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

The first thing Levsky did when he set foot on Bulgarian soil was to purchase 500 rifles «of the best type» and to collect money for other purchases. At the same time he did not slacken his work on the training of military leaders for the uprising. In several letters he urged the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee to secure scholarships for 200 Bulgarian lads to study at the military school in Belgrade for «people's leaders on the battlefield.»



Another important task which lay ahead of him after his return from Bucharest was to go the rounds of the local revolutionary committees, to provide them with the printed statute and to instruct them in their future work.

Owing to the rising tide of revolution the organisation had grown and Levsky's work had increased immensely. No matter how hard he tried he could not do the whole work alone. The attempt to share some of his responsibilities with his assistants, however, proved unsuccessful. After the loss of Anghel Kunchev, the courage of those whom Levsky commissioned flagged and Dimiter Obshty, too self-willed to listen to reason, ever more frequently indulged in «arbitrariness and folly,» as Levsky himself wrote. The trips of Levsky and his assistants became increasingly difficult and dangerous. Alarmed by the enhanced activities of the revolutionary organisation, the Turkish authorities increased their vigilance seeking for Levsky, the elusive «spectre of the Empire», in every hole and corner.

The apostle decided, therefore, to reconstruct the revolutionary organisation by merging the local committees into revolutionary districts. «This is what I should do throughout Bulgaria,» he wrote. «It will spare us time and money, our work will be safer and there will be less danger that anything might fall into the hands of the enemy.»

Setting up the revolutionary districts, Levsky also worked out the fundamental rules binding the new organisational units. He also gave detailed instructions on the administrative organisational work of the committees under the new conditions.

The effected change marked great progress not only in the development of the internal revolutionary organisation but of the liberation movement in general. It came as a result of the whole course of past events. Unfortunately, Levsky was unable to put into practice his plan of the revolutionary districts.

## BETRAYAL

On his return from Rumania Levsky summoned all revolutionaries whom he had entrusted with particular zones. They had to be sworn to the new statute and to have their



authorisation papers renewed and stamped with the new seal. «I also asked Dimiter Obshty to come and report on his work so far, to get his authorisation papers and return to his zone. But he did not show up,» Levsky advised the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee.

Fully convinced that things in Obshty's zone had gone wrong, Levsky insisted that immediately an end be put to this state of affairs in the organisation. The intervention of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee which sent a special representative to Bulgaria could not ward off events.

In spite of Levsky's categorical injunction on September 20, 1872, Dimiter Obshty besieged the narrow gorge of the Arabakonak pass with his band, attacking and robbing the Turkish state treasury, without losing any of his men.

At the beginning the authorities were cleverly deceived and the inquiry was given the wrong slant. The authorities were left with the impression that the robbery was committed by dismissed Turkish officers. But the chatter of the men with whom Obshty had committed the robbery set the police on the tracks of the real culprits. After the first arrests the authorities followed Dimiter Obshty and caught him near Lukovit on October 27, 1872.

Mass arrests rapidly followed. Some of the committee members betrayed each other under threats and intimidation, and others by common agreement in order to ward off the suspicion that they had acted as ordinary robbers.

These tactics of mass betrayal suggested by Obshty were readily adopted by the arrested with the hope that some of them might thus be able to save their skins. On the other hand, the robbery was given a political tinge and the accused hoped that public opinion in Europe would intervene on their behalf.

Adopting these tactics of total betrayal, they not only disclosed the circumstances of the robbery, but the very foundations of the whole revolutionary organisation. What Levsky feared most, did actually happen. A month later, the inquiry commission uncovered the whole network of committees in the Orkhanye and Teteven counties. The police arrested almost all the revolutionaries and the leading members of the Lovech, Pleven and Sofia committees.



At that time Levsky was touring the country. He received news of the betrayal and the arrests in South Bulgaria and immediately returned. In Stara Zagora the Turnovo district messenger brought him two letters from Karavelov.

In his first letter Karavelov urged Levsky to do «all in his power» to set the prisoners free by force, because «otherwise everything would go to pieces.» In his second letter of November 1, Karavelov insisted that revolution should be proclaimed: «Circumstances are such that a great deal of courage is required on your part and that the revolution should be proclaimed. . . you must go into battle without losing a moment.»

Karavelov and the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee were greatly alarmed. They apprehended the complete rout of the organisation, worried about the sacrifices and feared the loss of confidence of the people «whom they could never again induce to make a revolution.»

Obviously, Karavelov did not count on the success of the uprising but on the political repercussions it would have in Europe, in demonstrating that the Bulgarian people deserved freedom and human rights. No less than Karavelov Levsky foresaw the disastrous effect the Arabakonak robbery would have on the people, but he also knew that it was not enough to issue a «command» for a revolution in order to raise them in arms.

Relying above all on the people's forces, Levsky was of the opinion that they should be so prepared for an armed fight that they would never lay down their arms until the final victory. No matter how perturbed he was by the events in Orkhanye and Sofia, he did not feel that there were sufficient grounds to stake the future of the whole nation. He had a profound faith in that future and was neither frightened nor discouraged by a temporary and partial failure. That is why he gave a negative answer to Karavelov. The committees on their part also answered negatively «after long and serious consideration.» In their answer the Stara Zagora members insisted that the revolution be postponed «for at least a year» because «according to the directives of Aslan Dervishoglu (Levsky), the great-



est fool would not think that it was possible to succeed in an undertaking in such a rush when we are not at all prepared.»

At the end of the month Levsky went to Pazardjik. There, closer to Sofia, he conceived various plans for setting free the arrested committee members but the thought that this might complicate matters made him give up his intention.

Wishing to get first-hand information, he sent a special messenger to Sofia and Orkhanye for the purpose of finding out exactly «how things stood.» From the letter he sent to his comrades in Orkhanye, it became evident that he had decided to go to Rumania. Levsky wanted to lay before the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee all his arguments for and against an early uprising and after the question had been thoroughly examined, a decision could be taken. «According to the statute,» he wrote to the Lovech members, «no uprising should be called for before we are sure that we can paddle our own canoe.» At that moment it was imperative to act quickly so that «no other cases like the Orkhanye mishap should occur.»

On December 1, Levsky started out for Rumania. He did not, however, take the most direct and safest road but headed for Lovech, although he had been warned of the great dangers awaiting him there. He wanted to hearten the committee members, to breathe new confidence into them and to restore their calm. «You knew very well,» he wrote, «that this could happen at any time. You promised that you would be firm. Where is your firmness now? Be daring in the future. Those who are arrested are arrested, but the rest must remember that they have taken an oath.» Secondly, since «Obshty knew all the members,» Levsky wanted to hide the committee archives, as well as all sums at the disposal of the local committee and to ask priest Krustyu, president of the committee, to account for «sums belonging to other committees.» «I asked him about these sums earlier, but he wrote that he had borrowed them for a day or two for his personal use,» Levsky wrote to the Lovech members. «Hasn't he read the statute? Doesn't he know that committee money may be needed at any moment?»



## ARREST, TRIAL AND THE GALLOWS

At the same time Levsky heard from Lovech that letters bearing his signature had been sent there. The author of these letters could only be someone close to the organisation, probably an outstanding committee member who well knew Levsky's writing and where the committee archives were kept. These were sure signs of disintegration. The security of the organisation was jeopardised. Betrayal was at hand.

Levsky suspected priest Krustyu, president of the Lovech committee. Official Turkish documents confirmed the veracity of his accusation. Levsky who arrived in Lovech on December 26, 1872 did not get in touch with priest Krustyu. Betraying the revolutionary organisation, the priest had become a tool of the Turkish authorities. His task was to find the traces of Levsky and to send the guards of the Sultan's state after him. The committee was completely disrupted, fear paralysed the members who had escaped danger, and the Turkish police was afoot. Levsky had no choice, but to hide the committee archives and leave the town. The next day he set out for Turnovo, accompanied by a member of the Lovech committee. In the evening the two travellers reached the village of Kukrina and spent the night in the inn of Hristo Latinetsa, a devoted member of the Committee. Under the innocuous pretext that he had to see the leader of the organisation, priest Krustyu learned when Levsky had left and in what direction he had gone. Early in the morning, when Levsky and his companion were getting ready for the journey, the inn was surrounded by the police. Armed with two guns, Levsky tried to make his way out. He was wounded, and after an unequal stubborn fight fell into the hands of the enemy.

From Lovech he was sent to Turnovo, from there to Sofia to be tried with the rest of the organisation members by a special court, composed of high officials of the Sultan such as General Ali Saib Pasha, President of the State Council, Major Shekir Bey of the General Staff and the Bulgarian chorbadi Hadji Ivancho Penchovich, faithful servant to his masters.

In court the great apostle of freedom displayed all his power of mind and moral dignity. «My name is Vassil, my



father's — Ivan, I was born in Karlovo and am thirty-six years of age. My occupation is to help my countrymen. I went around the country giving them confidence and hope in the future,» answered Levsky with dignity.

His whole behaviour in court revealed him as a persistent revolutionary and devoted patriot. The efforts of the court to get at the secrets of the organisation were dashed against his iron resistance.

«Didn't you meet any friends of yours during your tours?»

«I met nobody. . . I don't know anybody.»

«Don't you know Dimiter who is sitting across the hall?»

«I saw him twice in Rumania, but knew nothing about his business there.»

«Were you not in contact with committee people? Didn't you know them?»

«According to the statute, it wasn't my business to know them.»

«Don't you know the messengers?»

«They were committee people, I don't know them.»

«How were the arms bought?»

«Perhaps they were bought at the fairs.»

«Whom do you know in Plovdiv?»

«I know a doctor there, I sent him a letter, but he returned it.»

«Why man, we are not asking you about those who have returned letters, but about those who have accepted them. That's what we are asking. Tell us their names!»

Levsky's examination which lasted three days continued in the same atmosphere. Faithful to his duty, he betrayed none and did his utmost to save whatever he could. He did not lose presence of mind to his very last minute. Levsky had devoted his whole life to his home country and nothing could intimidate him. He did not worry about the liberation movement, for he was convinced that it would not perish after his death. Others were to continue the fight and bring it to a successful end. The court considered Levsky a «very sly and cunning man, also known for his great courage,» which accounted for the fact that he was not «immediately arrested.» The court was convinced that «Levsky was the author and initiator» of the unrest among



the Bulgarian people, because he had emerged as the «competent and central figure» of the revolutionary movement. After admitting that Levsky «had honourably fulfilled his duty» of «leader and organiser of the disturbances» the court sentenced him to death...

Till his very last moment Levsky retained his high consciousness of a revolutionary and patriot. He was great in life, and great before death. Not for a moment did he fear death. Even when the Sultan confirmed his death sentence, he did not lose presence of mind.

On February 19, 1873 the great patriot died on the gallows near Sofia. The boundless grief of the people was best expressed in the immortal verses of Hristo Botev:

### THE HANGING OF VASSIL LEVSKY

O mother mine, dear land of my birth,  
Why do you weep so piteously, tenderly?  
You, dread raven, accursed bird,  
Over whose grave do you croak so terribly?  
Mother, I know, I know you are weeping  
For the fact you're a woman toiling in slavery,  
For the fact, mother, that your fine voice  
Is a voice without help, a voice in the wilderness.  
Weep! For there on the bounds of Sofia  
Sticks up, I see it, a stark black gibbet,  
And there your finest son, Bulgaria,  
Hangs on the rope so heavy and horrible.  
The raven terribly, evilly croaks,  
Wolves and dogs howl out on the fell.  
The old men hotly their God invoke,  
The women weep and the children yell.  
The winter sings its evil song,  
The whirlwind tosses the thorn in the plain,  
And cold and frost and weeping forlorn  
Heap up a deep drift of heart's pain.

**Hristo Botev**



## LEVSKY AND PRESENT DAY BULGARIA

Levsky's revolutionary work was not in vain. Only three years after his heroic death, in April 1876, the Bulgarian people rose to arms. The uprising, which went down in history as the «April uprising», was ruthlessly suppressed. Thousands of people were massacred, hundreds of towns and villages were set on fire and reduced to ashes. Progressive people throughout the world were shocked by the savage cruelty of the Turkish butchers. It was among the Russian people that the infinite sufferings of the Bulgarians and their passionate yearning for national liberation found deepest sympathy. Only five years after Levsky's death the century-long dreams of the Bulgarian people came true. The Russian brothers brought freedom to the Bulgarian people, sacrificing the life of 200,000 of their men. This won the boundless love and gratitude of the Bulgarian people for their brothers and liberators. This feeling of love and gratitude is still greater today. For it was the valiant Soviet Army which drove away the German hordes from Bulgarian soil, giving an opportunity to the Bulgarian people, arms in their hands against the fascist butchers, to take their destiny into their own hands. The sons carried on the liberation mission of their fathers. On September 9, 1944 the great Russian people liberated Bulgaria for a second time.

This is what Vassil Kolarov had to say about Bulgaria's liberation from Turkish national and economic oppression: «Bulgaria emerged as an independent and progressive state thanks to two important events: the Russo-Turkish war and the Bulgarian national revolution. That is why the Bulgarian people pay tribute to the noble Russian people who bore the brunt of the Liberation War, and to the valiant Bulgarian revolutionaries who prepared the ground for the Russian victory, thus ensuring rights and privileges to the Bulgarian working people from town and village.»

Levsky's immortal work left indelible traces in the history of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement. These revolutionary traditions were taken up by the Bulgarian working class. Headed by the Party of Dimiter Blagoev and Georgi Dimitrov, in a new historical setting, this class led



the struggle for the social liberation of the people. This struggle reached a high point in the September uprising of 1923 — the first anti-fascist uprising in the world.

In their fight against capitalism and monarcho-fascist dictatorship in 1941-1944, the Bulgarian working people drew inspiration from the glowing example and life-work of Levsky and Botev. It is not by chance that two of the most glorious partisan detachments bore the names of these immortal Bulgarian national heroes. Today, led by their Communist Party, the Bulgarian people are building up socialism, translating the behests of their national heroes into a living reality.

In the present day setting «the Fatherland Front is the continuer of the work and behests of the great national revolutionaries — Vassil Levsky and Hristo Botev,» said our leader and teacher Georgi Dimitrov.

Today Levsky's cherished dream for a «pure and sacred republic» is a historical fact. The people's power has secured «true and just freedom» and set up a real «people's government.» Levsky's dream of «brotherhood among people, irrespective of religious creed and nationality» has also come true. Led by the Soviet Union, the Bulgarian people and the People's Democracies, firmly welded in the camp of peace, democracy and socialism, are forging a brotherly union of the working people throughout the world. Levsky's ideal of a better social order has also been realised. The Bulgarian people have even gone further and will continue to stride ever forward. Following the great ideas of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin, the People's Government liberated the toiling masses from every form of exploitation. As Vulko Chervenkov, President of the Council of Ministers and General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party put it «we are now about to complete the laying of the foundations of socialism and are about to face the tasks of building the very edifice of socialism.»

Today, 75 years after Bulgaria's liberation and 80 years after Levsky's death, his heroic life still inspires all Bulgarian patriots to serve their country with the same self-sacrificing devotion, to work for the building of socialism in Bulgaria and the preservation of peace throughout the world.



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**LEVSKY AS STANDARD-BEARER OF PANAYOT HITOV'S  
DETACHMENT.**





**LEVSKY IN THE UNIFORM OF RAKOVSKY'S LEGION  
IN BELGRADE.**





MEMBERS OF RAKOVSKY'S LEGION. LEVSKY IN THE CENTRE (marked by x).





**FROM RIGHT TO LEFT: VASSIL LEVSKY, PANAYOT HITOV  
AND IVAN KURSHOVSKY.**

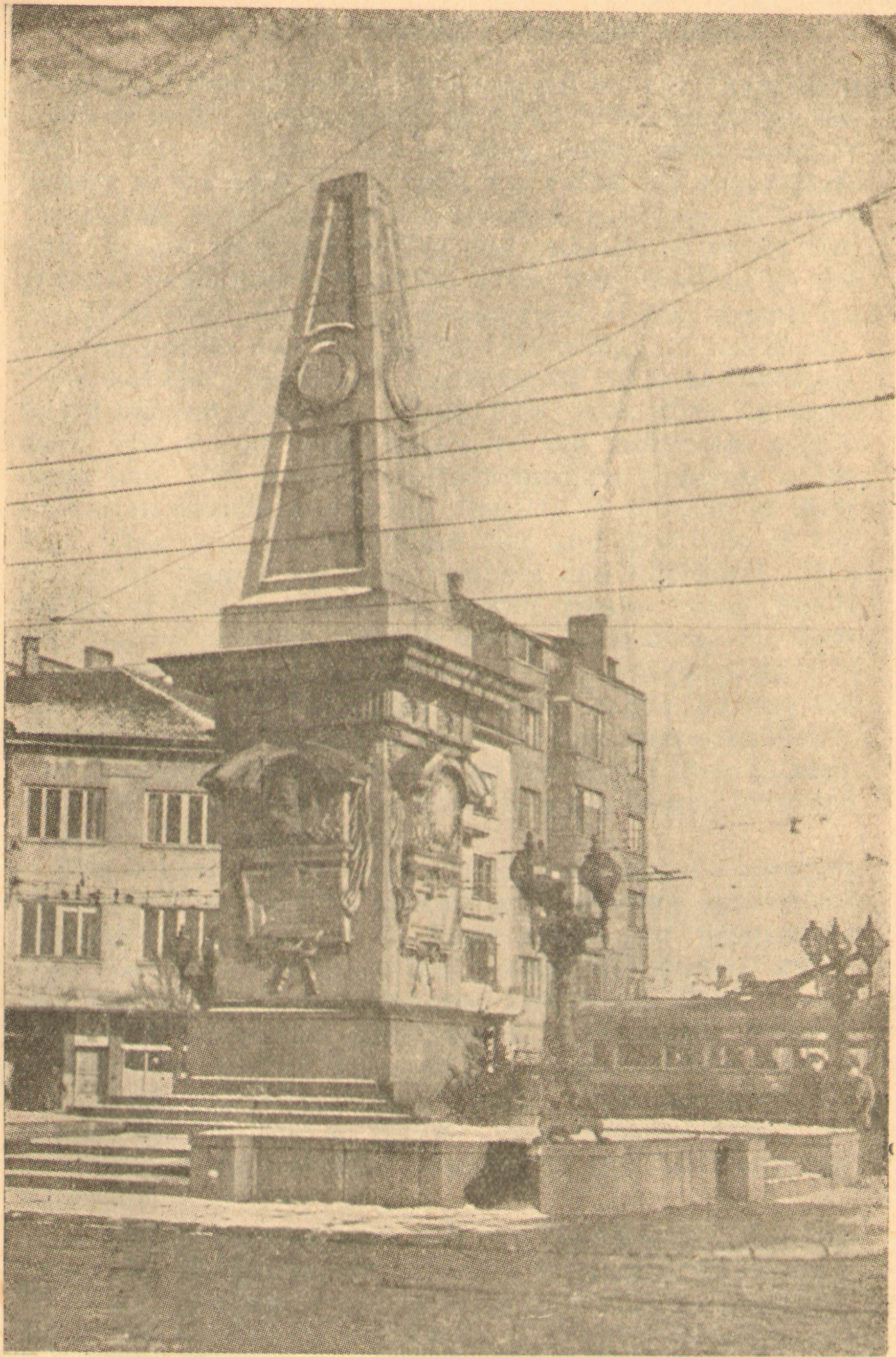




**LEVSKY'S ARREST.**

Oil painting by Professor Kozhukharov





**A FINE MONUMENT NOW RISES ON THE SPOT WHERE  
LEVSKY WAS HANGED.**







